

A Review on Absenteeism

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ABSTRACT

Absenteeism is a serious workplace problem and an expensive occurrence for both employers and employees seemingly unpredictable in nature. The term absenteeism refers to the failure to attend to work. It is one of the major problems faced by companies across the globe today. Unscheduled absenteeism badly hurts the progress of an organization resulting in loss of productivity, increased costs in hiring additional staff and low morale among the workers. It is high time that employers address this problem on a priority basis. This paper on Absenteeism covers the types, causes, effects and remedial measures of absenteeism.

Keywords : Absenteeism, Culpable Absenteeism, Chronic Absenteeism, Productivity, turnover

Introduction

Absenteeism is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation. Traditionally, absenteeism has been viewed as an indicator of poor individual performance, as well as a breach of an implicit contract between employee and employer; it was seen as a management problem, and framed in economic or quasi-economic terms. More recent scholarship seeks to understand absenteeism as an indicator of psychological, medical, or social adjustment to work.

Types of Absenteeism

Absences that will require some type of employer intervention are split into two different categories; Non-Culpable and Culpable. It is essential that industries could make a distinction between these two types of absence, record them separately and resolve them differently. For instance, disciplinary actions may only be used to address absences that a determined to be culpable. Counseling measures are used to address non-culpable absences and are planned to be constructive and assist employees reduce their level of absenteeism. Absenteeism can be classified as follows :

On the basis of Time

(a) Long Absenteeism Long absenteeism is supposed when the person is absenting for more than eight days (depending upon the industry and nature of work).

(b) Chronic Absenteeism Chronic absenteeism is when employee remains absent for more than three days in a month. Chronic absentees incur more loss to a company as supervisors do have an intimation of long absenting employees and do the arrangement as per the condition. But in case of chronic cases additional expense of over time is incurred. Which is loss to company.

On the basis of Nature

(a) Innocent Absenteeism

Innocent absenteeism refers to employees who are absent for reasons outside their control; like sickness and injury. Innocent absenteeism is not culpable which means it is blameless. In a labour relations context this means that it cannot be remedied or treated by disciplinary actions.

(b) Culpable Absenteeism

Culpable absenteeism refers to employees who are absent without permission for reasons which are within their control. For example, an employee who is on sick leave although he/she is not sick, and it can be confirmed that the employee was not sick, is guilty of culpable absenteeism. To be culpable is to be blameworthy.

For the large majority of employees, absenteeism is legitimate, innocent absenteeism which occurs uncommonly. Procedures for disciplinary action apply only to culpable absenteeism. Many organizations take the view that through the process of individual absentee counselling and treatment, the majority of employees will overcome their problems and return to acceptable level of regular attendance.

Causes of Absenteeism

The rate of the absenteeism in Indian industries is very high and cannot be dismissed. A Statistical study of absenteeism of Indian Labour observed that, the basic cause of absenteeism in India is that industrial worker is still part-time peasant. Thus the workers go to find jobs at cities after the harvesting their crops. It means that when the transplanting season. These workers consider to the modern industrialism is insecure. Thus, cause to high rate of the absenteeism in the industrial sector.

According to the Labour Investigation Committee (1946), there were many reasons that caused the absenteeism of the industrial workers. The Commission pointed out many factors which caused the absenteeism in Indian industries. These factors are:

1. Sickness and low vitality: The committee pointed out that sickness is most important factor for absenteeism in almost of the Industrial sector. Epidemics like cholera, small-pox and malaria always break out in severe form in most industrial areas. The low vitality of the Indian workers makes them easy prey to such epidemics and bad housing and unsanitary conditions of living aggravate the trouble. However, the Commission has been noticed that the rate of absenteeism among the female workers is higher than their male counterparts.

2. Means of Transport: The Commission also stated that the transport facilities also play a major role for the absenteeism of the worker in the industries. It has been pointed out that, the rate of absenteeism is higher in those factories where transport facilities are not easily available as compared to those where such facilities are easily available or provided by the factory itself.

3. Hours of work: The long hours of work also affect the worker's efficiency as a result their sickness rate and absenteeism rate are increased.

4. Nightshift: It also been pointed out that there is a greater percentage of absenteeism during the nightshifts than in the dayshifts, due to the greater discomforts of work during the night-time.

5. Rural migration: The committee also pointed out that probably the most predominant cause of absenteeism is the frequent urge of rural migration. It has been noticed that the workers go back to their villages at the time of harvesting and sowing the crops. It increases the rate of absenteeism in factories.

6. Accident: Industrial accident depends upon the nature of work to be performed by the worker and his

ability for doing that work. In case of dangerous nature of job, the accidents occur more commonly which lead to higher rate of absenteeism.

7. Social and religious Function: It has been noticed that workers become absent from their duties on occasions of social and religious functions. As the workers like to join their families on such occasions, they go back to their villages for like to join short periods.

8. Drinking and amusement: The committee pointed out that drinking and amusements were also responsible for absenteeism. Since drinking and amusements in the late hours of night make it difficult for the workers to reach in time on their duties. They like to become absent rather than late since they know that badli workers will be substituted for them, if they are late.

9. After Pay-Day: The Labour Investigation committee also noted the level of absenteeism is reasonably high immediately after the pay-day because they get their wages, they feel like having a good time or return to their villages to make purchases for the family and to meet them, so the absenteeism is high after they got paid.

10. Nature of work: The absenteeism rate is also affected by the nature of work. According to Prof. William pointed out that absenteeism prevails because workers are not adapted to the factory life and factory discipline. In other words, absenteeism prevails because the nature of work in factories is different from that for which the worker is adapted. So when they come to work in the factory, they feel strange, this new situation make them uncomfortable, so lead to high rate of absenteeism of the industrial workers.

11. Other causes : The above factor which are caused the absenteeism in the Industrial which have been pointed out by the Labour Commission. However, there can be two other factors which caused the absenteeism in industrial sector. These factors are: a) personal Factors and b) workplace factors.

A. Personal factor: The personal factor also divided into other sub-factors, these are:

i. Personal Attitude: The employees attitudes are different. The Employees with strong workplace ethics will respect their work and value the contribution they make to their companies. Such employees will not engage themselves in taking unscheduled off. On the other hand, employees with very low or no work ethics are indiscipline and have lot of integrity and behavioural issues. Since, they feel no obligation towards the company, absenteeism comes easily to them.

ii. Age: The younger employees are often restless. They want to spend time with their friends and have

fun, instead of being tied down with work responsibility. This lack of ownership often leads them to take unauthorized time off. With age, people gain experience and maturity, which makes them focused and responsible. Their approach is rather professional and they prefer to stick to their chairs to get the work done. If ever they are found absent, then it could be due to sickness.

iii .Seniority: Employees, who have been associated with the company for a long time are well-adjusted with the working culture and the job, therefore, they find no reason to be absent without permission. On the other hand, fresh hires are more prone to taking adhoc breaks to unwind themselves.

iv. Gender: Women generally do a balancing act by shuffling their time between home and work. Family, being their primary priority, they don't think twice before taking a step towards absenteeism.

B. Workplace Factors

i. Stress: The pressure at work sometimes takes a toll on the employees. This results in increased levels of stress. The employees then resort to excuses which can help them stay away from work.

ii. Work Routine: Routine job over a period of time can get monotonous. The employees find the job functions boring. They rather choose time off to do something interesting than come to work.

iii. Job Satisfaction: If employees do not find their job challenging, unhappiness creeps in. That leads to more absenteeism in the workplace.

Effects of Absenteeism on Industrial Progress

It is quite clear that absenteeism is a common feature of industrial labor in India. It hinders industrial growth. Absenteeism is one of the root causes of labor unrest. It affects the worker's earnings as well as the company in the following manner:

(a) Loss to Workers

Due to the habit of being absenting regularly worker's income is reduced to a large extent. It is because there is a general principle of no work no pay. Thus the time lost in terms of absenteeism is a loss of income to workers.

(b) Loss to Employers

On other hand, the employer has to suffer a greater loss due to absentees. It disturbs the efficiency and discipline of industries consequently, industrial production is reduced. In order to meet the emergency and strikes, an additional labor force is also maintained by the industries. On certain occasions, those workers are employed who present themselves at factory gates. During strikes they are adjusted in place of absent workers. Their adjustment brings

serious complications because such workers do not generally prove themselves up to work. Higher absenteeism is an evil both for workers and the employers and ultimately it adversely affects the production of industries.

(c) Others

- Job turnover of employees.
- They cannot fulfill needs of their family nor their objective.
- Worker who is habitually absent may be removed from services causing a great suffering to themselves and their family.
- Inexperience in new technology increases industrial accidents.
- Workers will lose wages for unauthorized absence from duty.
- Repair and maintenance cost increases due to regular breakdown of machinery by inexperienced work.
- Work pressure on employees who are present will be increased.
- Its effect on status and safety.
- Decrease in Productivity.
- Order cannot be executed in time as production scheduled is delayed or upset.
- Quality of work suffers

How to minimize absenteeism

There are many theories to clarify of absence causes. And it make us understand, we can not solve causal absence problem and manage absenteeism as minimum as we could, with simply method. We need broad approach for reducing absenteeism issue.

1) Train managers about cost of absenteeism, how to manage it and how to conducting counseling session with their subordinate.

2) Make additional regulation to reduce pay on their absence day and inform to them how much that they have lost money. It will avoid them to extend their absence any longer than necessary. But you have to check the local legal rules and policy before apply this method.

3) Make system to records the employee absence. Someday you will need it to find absence pattern, unreasonable absence excuse or anything else as strong facts for give consequences or legal actions.

4) Give appreciation to the attendance. You can make simple celebration just to pronounce who is the best

employee in attendance. Let all member of the team to choose the winner.

5) Make social punishment to the absenteeism. You can make it by giving reward for team who has outstanding member attendance. It will make other member give pressure to employee who has bad attendance record.

6) Make absence policy support with other policy, especially for policy related to the employee benefit. Such as you can make guideline to do not give loan for anyone with poor attendance.

7) The recruiter should put medical and health provision of candidate as one of priority.

8) Make sure that candidate has positive attitude about attendance and its importance

9) It is very important to count not only competency fit, but you have to consider job fit. Its include the compatibility of candidate interest and personality with nature of the job. If there is no chemistry, there is no motivation also. Employee with low motivation to work tend to high in absenteeism rate.

10) Make flexible working time arrangement. Such as, if employee can not go on Monday for domestic demands, they can replace it with Saturday. Or if he/she attend half day, he/she can replace it with additional working hours tomorrow

11) Make job exciting You can enlarge responsibility, improve the nature of job or make it challenging to your subordinate. Don't forget to give additional support such as training and coaching.

Conclusion

Since every company is different, it will require various levels of analyses to recognize the factors that impact absenteeism for a specific employer. If absenteeism is identified as a significant problem, the company will need to take a hard look at the cause of the problem and begin to consider strategies to evoke lost revenues. The more aware a company is of issues connected to employee absenteeism, the more successful they will be in implementing strategies to reduce the related cost and increase productivity.

Thus, it is observed that absenteeism can be restricted to a great extent if the workers are committed and are supported by all levels of management. An effective attendance record-keeping system, consultation and

open communication by the management can create healthy productive work environment in the company. This would decrease grievances and give greater employee satisfaction.

In cases of chronic absenteeism there is some problem from employer side or in ability to motivate employees. In this situation supervisor just not only pays attention to productivity but also to their subordinates so that they may not feel neglected. Chronic absenteeism has reduced deliberately through counseling and increasing understanding between the employer and employees. To reduce absenteeism basic formats of HR tools could be applied. Only when the positive approach is unsuccessful, the company need to use the remedial approach to deal with habitual abusers or with excessive absentee cases. In all cases the company's actions must be fair and reasonable and consistently applied.

While tackling workplace absenteeism by direct action may alleviate the problem in the short-term, addressing the cause of the problem will provide long-term benefits.

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